French River Provincial Park

MANAGEMENT PLAN

Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources

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PARK MANAGEMENT PLANNING SERIES

FRENCH RIVER PROVINCIAL PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN

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(detail)

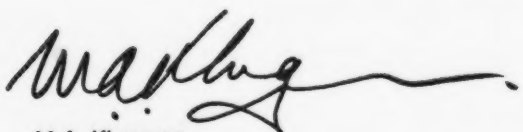
APPROVAL STATEMENT

The French River has long been recognized as an important historical travel route. It was used by native peoples, early explorers and the Voyageurs of the fur trade. In more recent times, it has become an important recreational area while still maintaining much of its wilderness character.

The designation of the French River as a provincial park and the management plan presented here seek to protect the historical, cultural and natural features of this great river.

During the public participation process leading to the preparation of this plan, it was made very clear to us that the people using the river basically like it the way it is and do not wish to see major changes. This plan reflects that concern and emphasizes protection as the main park objective.

We are most grateful to the public for their input in the planning for the French River. A special thanks to the Public Advisory Group that worked along with us. Parks Canada's financial assistance and technical expertise is much appreciated in the preparation of this plan.



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Recollet Falls

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1. INTRODUCTION

French River Provincial Park will be managed to protect this nationally significant river. It comprises 51 150 hectares, situated 60 km south of Sudbury and 300 km north of Toronto (figure 1). It flows from Lake Nipissing into Georgian Bay; a series of island-dotted lakes interconnected by channels, rapids and waterfalls. The river is best known as an historic transportation route. Its present use is devoted primarily to water oriented recreational activities such as boating, canoeing and fishing. Although there is considerable cottage, resort and residential development in certain areas, most of the river is undeveloped. It is the natural quality of the French River, which has remained largely unchanged through time, that provides its greatest appeal.

1.1 RESOURCE CHARACTERISTICS

There are a variety of natural and cultural features found along the French River. The many scenic rapids, chutes and falls were once viewed as obstacles on the exploration and fur trade "route to the west". They are a powerful reminder of the hardships faced by men like Samuel de Champlain and Pierre de La Vérendrye as evident by many authentic artifacts recovered throughout the river. These same fast water sites are an important part of the pickerel habitat that extends out onto the shoals of Georgian Bay.

Native peoples used these same productive fisheries, camping on the river shores. Symbols of their culture are still in evidence at a few small pictograph and petroglyph sites.

The French River also contains many landform and vegetation features that are representative of this area of the Canadian Shield. It is one of the few free flowing rivers that existed prior to continental glaciation. The slow advance of ice molded intricate surface grooves and an extensive delta island mass on Georgian Bay. Many rare and representative plant species are found here as well as intriguing wildlife such as the Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake, Wapiti (elk), and a large Double-crested Cormorant colony.

1.2 MANAGEMENT PLANNING

The French River Provincial Park Management Plan provides policies that will guide the orderly development and effective management of the Park over the next 20 years. The policies contained in this plan are based on the achievement of the goal and objectives of this waterway park.
Background information on management planning of the French River was originally collected in the Provincial Waterway Parks Evaluation Study of 1976 and the French River Canadian Heritage Rivers pilot study of 1979.

The river was proposed as a candidate waterway provincial park in the Sudbury and North Bay District Land Use Guidelines (DLUG, 1983). The French River Candidate Provincial Waterway Park Management Plan, which incorporated a proposal to designate the French River as a Canadian Heritage River, was presented to the public in August, 1984. It was formulated with the assistance of a Public Advisory Group comprising representatives of the various user groups of the river. This proposed management plan was presented to the public through extensive advertisements and mailings, open houses in the communities of Alban and Dokis, and a series of meetings with interested persons and groups. The following represents a summary of the main public concerns pertaining to the proposed plan and outlines the direction the French River Provincial Park Management Plan has taken to alleviate these concerns. A detailed account of the public comments is presented in the Public Involvement Summary (March, 1985).

1.2.1 Public Response to the Proposed Management Plan

A strong public feeling was expressed that Park establishment would attract increased use and aggravate the existing problems of heavy fishing pressure, garbage, vandalism, theft, environmental degradation and fires, etc. It was generally perceived that Crown land use has grown steadily over the years and is considered to be quite high. Property owners and local residents have tolerated this use, but would not like to see a major influx of new users. They feel that existing problems would worsen.

Property and resort owners have a deep sense of attachment for the river. Several of them take an active role cleaning up and protecting the Crown land adjacent to their property.

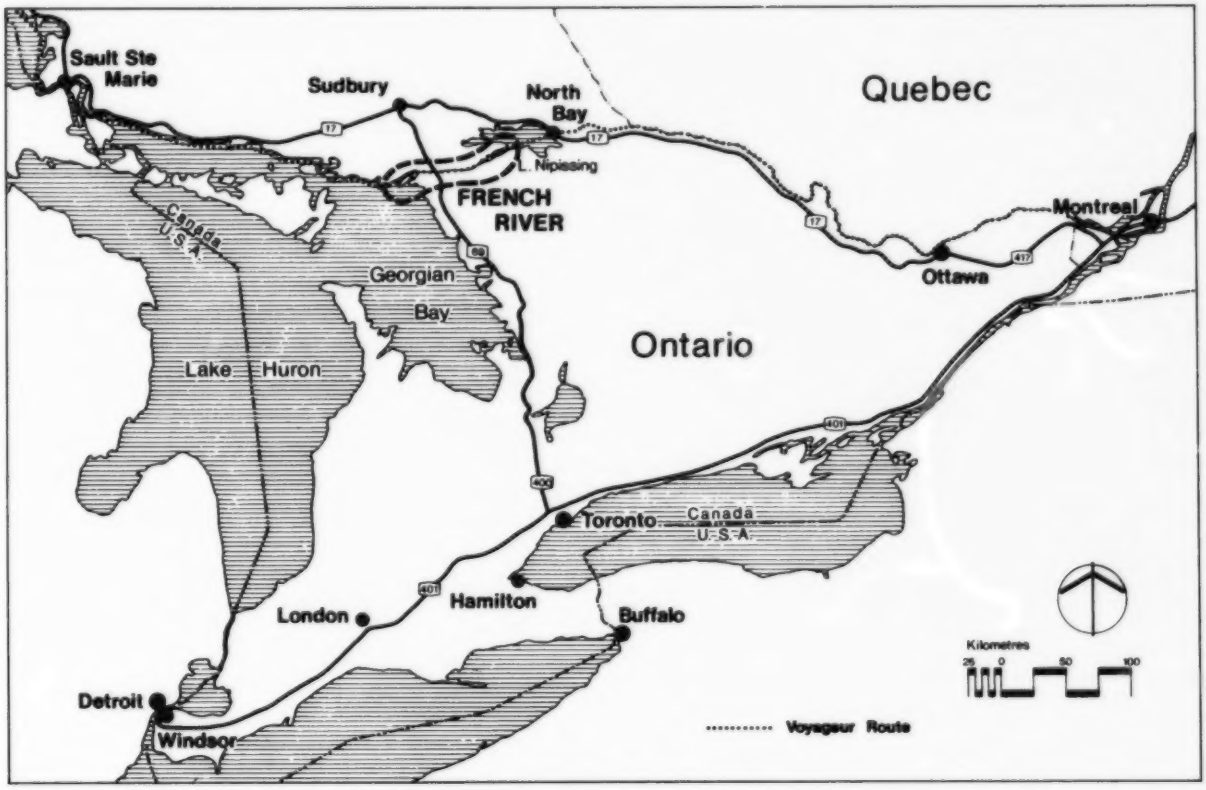
The public recognizes that many of the problems associated with use will continue to occur regardless of Park establishment and would likely worsen should use continue to grow without appropriate management. Several respondents have indicated a need for an increased Ministry role in managing the river but felt that it need not be called a provincial park.

There was considerable concern voiced about the protection and tourism development objectives which were felt to be at cross-

Figure 1

French River Provincial Park

Regional Setting



purposes. There was a general impression that the proposed plan would actively promote increased use and tourism development on the river. The vast majority of repondents strongly favour protection and are opposed to further development and increased use on the river.

A significant concern, raised primarily by the local residents in the Alban area is the loss of freedom that would result from use controls brought on by the Park. Many do not want to see designated campsites and are strongly opposed to paying for overnight camping. They want to continue using the river as they always have and are opposed to any restrictions on their activities.They like the river the way it is and do not want to see any changes.

1.2.2 Ministry of Natural Resources' Response to Public Concerns

The French River Provincial Park Management Plan has addressed these public concerns through:

- a de-emphasis of promotion, during the peak use period, with the objective of maintaining a use level on the river similar to that which presently exists;
- a public information program to educate Park users in ways to reduce impact problems;
- a public involvement program to encourage the users of the river to assist in the operation of the Park;
- a change in the development direction to bring it more in line with the Park protection objective by minimizing future new development on Park land;
- an emphasis on achieving, where possible, management objectives through nonregulatory means such as user education.

2. PARK POLICIES

2.1 PARK CLASSIFICATION

French River Provincial Park will be classified as a waterway park, one of six classes of Ontario Provincial Parks.

Waterway parks are corridors based on major water routes and include associated lands that are of particular recreational, historical and natural significance.

The French River has several resource and recreational attributes that warrant this special designation. The river is nationally significant as an historic transportation route. It is one of the best examples in Ontario of a still functioning preglacial drainage system. Its woodwardia bogs contain the largest population of Virginia Chain-fern in Canada. Of provincial significance are its Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake population and highly prized pickerel fishery. The river also provides excellent opportunites for small craft boating and canoeing. Waterway park designation will ensure that the river's natural quality and resource values will be protected for future generations to enjoy.

The French River Provincial Park Management Plan has been developed in accordance with the waterway class guidelines as set out in the Ontario Provincial Parks Planning and Management Policies and the District Land Use Guidelines for Sudbury and North Bay. The management plan describes the policies for resource management, client services and development of the Park. The focus of the plan is on the protection of the waterway environment and existing recreational and resource pursuits. Traditional uses such as motorboating, fishing, trapping and commercial bait-fishing will be permitted throughout the entire Park. Hunting and snowmobiling will be permitted with the exception of nature reserve zones.

The management effort will be specifically directed to support and accommodate canoe tripping and boat-in camping.

This will involve portage and campsite maintenance; the provision of directional and educational information and the establishment of controls as required to ensure a high quality Park experience. New development will be kept to a minimum.

2.2 CANADIAN HERITAGE RIVER RECOGNITION

The French River has been nominated by the Ministry of Natural Resources as a Canadian Heritage River. Nomination was accepted by the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board and it is one of the first rivers to become a candidate Canadian Heritage River.

Canadian Heritage Rivers are outstanding examples of Canada's natural heritage, or played a significant role in Canadian history or which offer outstanding opportunities for recreation. This national system of protected rivers has emerged over the last two decades as part of a growing concern to ensure that Canadian rivers are managed wisely.

The purpose of the Canadian Heritage Rivers System is to give national recognition to the "important" Canadian rivers, to ensure future management that will protect their natural and cultural heritage values and realize the opportunities they possess for recreation and heritage appreciation. The Park Management Plan will be lodged with the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board in satisfaction of the requirements for Canadian Heritage River designation. Once designated, the river will be managed in accordance with this plan.

2.3 PARK GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The following are the goal and objectives of the French River Provincial Park.

2.3.1 Goal

To protect the outstanding landscape, natural features, and cultural resources of French River Provincial Park, and to provide high quality recreational and educational experiences in the Park.

2.3.2 Objectives

Waterway parks contribute to the achievement of Ontario's Provincial Park objectives: protection, tourism, recreation, and heritage appreciation.

Park management will respect the rights of landowners adjacent to the Park.

- **Protection:**
  To protect the natural and cultural environments of the French River.

The protection of the waterway environment is the prime objective which has priority over all others. The protection of the river's natural quality is vital to the achievement of the other Park objectives. The Park will protect a representative portion of the ancient geological earth history, modern biological environments and cultural features associated with this area between Lake Nipissing and Georgian Bay.

- **Tourism:**
  To support the French River tourist industry and encourage its long term viability.

The protection of the natural setting and resources of the river will ensure that tourists continue to enjoy a high quality outdoor environment. The tourism emphasis will be to support the continued viability of the French River tourist industry. Commercial establishments will serve as bases from which to explore the Park.

- **Recreation:**
  To provide high quality river recreation travel and camping opportunities in an outstanding natural setting.

The Ministry will support and accommodate canoeing, motorboating, and other traditional river uses. This will be accomplished by the protection of the Park's natural environment and the establishment of a recreation management program. The main recreational emphasis of the Park will be on the provision of dispersed camping opportunities for canoeists and small craft boaters. For the purposes of this plan, this use is referred to as backcountry travel. A target for the number of backcountry opportunities has been identified in the Sudbury and North Bay District Land Use Guidelines and will be further evaluated through the recreation management program. A refined target will be presented, if required, through the plan review procedure.

The management direction will be to maintain a low density backcountry travel use to ensure high quality experiences and minimize impact on the Park environment and adjacent private property. Although some overnight camping controls may be established as required, the Park will not impose controls or fees on the day use travel activity.

- **Heritage Appreciation:**
  To provide opportunities for unstructured individual exploration and appreciation of the natural and cultural heritage of the French River.

Due to the importance of the French River to the natural and cultural history of Ontario, heritage appreciation will receive special consideration in Park management efforts. Opportunities will be provided for unstructured individual exploration and appreciation of the natural and cultural heritage of the French River.

2.4 PARK BOUNDARY

The boundary of the Park includes a 200 metre shoreline strip on both sides of the river with the exception of Burnt Island where it is 120 m. All waters and islands in between are included. It extends from Lake Nipissing along the Little French River and Main Channel to include the mouth area and the Bustard Islands in Georgian Bay (figure 2). Privately owned land surrounded by the Park boundary is not included in the Park.

2.5 PARK ZONING

Lands and waters within French River Provincial Park are zoned so that they may be allocated to their most appropriate uses. There are natural environment zones, historical zones, nature reserve zones, and one development zone (figure 2).

Resource uses, recreational uses, and types of development which are permitted on Park lands and waters are listed by zone type. For simplicity, only those main uses of interest are listed here. A more substantive list is provided in the Ontario Provincial Park Planning and Management Policies. Resource and recreational uses will be subject to standard Ministry of Natural Resources regulations and/or French River Provincial Park management policies. These are discussed further in the Resource Management section that follows.

Zone descriptions highlight the location, dominant characteristics and/or significance and management direction of each zone. Statements pertaining to campsite development potential refer primarily to the designation and management of existing campsites. Subject to the backcountry target review, it is expected that very few new campsites will be developed along the river.

2.5.1 Natural Environment Zones

Natural environment zones include attractive sections of the waterway corridor where there is minimum development which supports low density camping activities, and associated aesthetic landscapes. The majority of the Park area is included in natural environment zones. The priority for natural environment zones will be recreation management and site protection.

Resource uses permitted:

— mineral exploration (scenic, natural heritage, archaeological, and historical sites excepted)
— commercial fishing (Georgian Bay waters as per existing licences and Upper French above Chaudière dams only)
— commercial bait-fishing
— trapping

Recreational uses permitted:

— canoeing
— motorboating
— hiking
— cross-country skiing
— snowmobiling
— sportfishing
— hunting
— dispersed individual site camping
— heritage appreciation
— scuba diving

Development permitted:

— trails
— portages
— necessary signs for route identification
— access roads (existing only)
— dispersed individual campsites
— minimal interpretive facilities
— temporary facilities as required for Park research and management

- **NE1 — Upper French River (7 518 ha)**

This zone, known as the Upper French River, extends from Lake Nipissing to Chaudière Rapids. It is lake-like in appearance and contains several islands and bays. The zone has many cottages and offers excellent opportunities for boating, yachting, fishing, hunting and canoeing. This zone will be managed to provide dispersed camping opportunities for small craft boaters, yachters and canoeists. There is some potential for campsite development in the zone. Fisheries management will be undertaken in conjunction with that in Lake Nipissing.

- **NE2 — Chaudière Channel and Little French (3 167 ha)**

This zone extends from Chaudière Rapids to Five Mile Rapids and includes the Little French River. The majority of the shoreline of this zone is not in the Park as it forms part of the Dokis Indian Reserve. The zone is largely undeveloped and offers an excellent natural setting for small craft boating, fishing, canoeing, hunting and scenic viewing. The Five Finger Rapids is the most scenic attraction of this zone. This zone will be managed to provide dispersed camping and scenic viewing opportunities for canoeists and small craft boaters. There is limited potential for campsite development due to the predominance of Indian land.

- **NE3 — South Channel (4 812 ha)**

This zone extends from Five Mile Rapids to the Highway 69 bridge. The eastern portion of the zone is largely undeveloped and natural. The western portion is developed and includes nu-

Figure 2

French River Provincial Park

Boundary and Zoning

Figure 2

French River Provincial Park

Boundary and Zoning

- Park Boundary
- Zone Boundary
- NR 1 — Zone Designation
- Patent
- Lease
- Licence of Occupation
- Land Use Permit
- Indian Reserve

Not included in Park

2 1 0 2 4 6 8 10 Kilometres

Note

All shoreline strips within the park boundary are 200m deep with the exception of Burnt Island where the strip is 120m deep.

merous cottages, a transmission line, and railway crossing. This zone offers good canoeing, small craft boating, fishing and hunting opportunities. It will be managed to provide dispersed camping opportunities for canoeists and small craft boaters. The emphasis for the provision of these opportunities will be in the eastern portion of the zone. There is some potential for campsite development there.

- **NE4 — Lower French and Mouth Area (34 235 ha)**

This zone, the largest in the Park, extends from Recollet Falls to Georgian Bay. It comprises a series of channels that flow into Georgian Bay. It is the least developed and wildest portion of the Park. Among its most interesting features are the river gorge, the confluence of the French, Pickerel and Wanapitei Rivers, the Georgian Bay shoreline and the Bustard Islands. This zone offers excellent small craft boating and canoeing and good fishing, hunting and wildlife viewing, along with yachting in the bays and channels off Georgian Bay. This zone will be managed to provide the highest quality waterway experience in the Park. Facilities will be kept to an absolute minimum. Given the size of the area, more river camping may occur here than in other zones, yet use will be at a much lower density than in the rest of the Park.

2.5.2 Nature Reserve Zones

Nature reserve zones include significant earth and life science features in the waterway corridor, which require management distinct from that in adjacent zones. They comprise five small land areas that contain natural features of provincial and/or national significance. There is no water surface in these zones. The priority for nature reserve zones will be protection, research and heritage appreciation. Research proposals for nature reserve and all other zones will be reviewed through Ministry of Natural Resources policy and guidelines. Based on research findings, nature reserve zoning may be revised in plan review.

Resource uses permitted:

— trapping
— cross-country skiing

Recreational uses permitted:

— hiking
— cross country skiing
— heritage appreciation

Development permitted:

— trails
— portages and existing boat tramway in NR3 Zone
— necessary signs for route identification
— minimal interpretive facilities, eg. outdoor display panel explaining significance of site
— temporary facilities as required for Park research and management, eg. survey crew base camp

- **NR1 — Virginia Chain-fern Wetlands (14 ha)**

This zone comprises two wetland sites situated by the Dallas Rapids and on the Eastern Outlet at the Elbow. The main features of these sites are the nationally significant Virginia Chain-fern and the provincially significant glacial grooving. The zone will be managed to protect the Virginia Chain-fern habitat and the bedrock that contains glacial grooving.

- **NR2 — Eastern Massasaga Rattlesnake Habitat (6 ha)**

This zone is located on the Main Outlet and surrounds the historic Coponaning Townsite. The main feature is the provincially significant Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake population. The zone will be managed to protect the Massasaga Rattlesnake habitat.

- **NR3 — Ice-Moulded Rock Channels (15 ha)**

This zone is located at the Bass Creek tramway. Site significance is attributed to the provincially significant glacial grooves and sculpturing. The zone will be managed to protect these rock formations. The tramway will be maintained.

- **NR4 — Macoun Rocks (5 ha)**

This zone comprises a series of small rock islands called the Macoun Rocks. Plant species rare to Ontario are found here. The zone will be managed to protect these species.

- **NR5 — Gull Rocks (20 ha)**

This zone comprises two small rock island groups including the Gull Rocks. They provide nesting sites for the provincially significant Double-crested Cormorants, and gulls. The zone will be managed to protect the cormorant nesting sites.

2.5.3 Historical Zones

Historical zones include significant historical resources in the waterway corridor which require management distinct from that in adjacent zones, and sections of the corridor in which there are outstanding opportunities for identification with historic waterway travellers and their activities. The comprise four sites that contain historical features of provincial and/or national significance. The priority for historical zones will be protection, heritage appreciation and research.

Resource uses permitted:

— commercial bait-fishing
— trapping

Recreational uses permitted:

— canoeing
— motorboating
— hiking
— cross-country skiing
— snowmobiling
— sportfishing
— hunting
— dispersed individual site camping (except for H4)
— heritage appreciation

Development permitted:

— trails
— portages and existing boat tramway
— necessary signs for route identification
— historical restorations and reconstructions
— dispersed campsites
— visitor information facilities (Zones H1, H3, H4 only)
— interpretive facilities
— facilities for Park research and management

- **H1 — Chaudière Rapids (295 ha)**

This zone is located at the Chaudière Rapids and abuts the Dokis Indian Reserve. The significance of the site is attributed to: the nationally significant voyageur route; regionally significant archaeological sites; rock paintings (pictographs); and a glacial pothole. The zone will be managed to protect and interpret these historical features. Historic plaques and displays may be provided.

- **H2 — Five Mile Rapids (975 ha)**

This zone comprises the Five Mile Rapids area. This very scenic, undeveloped area contains the longest stretch of white water along the French River. Significant historical features include: the nationally significant voyageur route; historic portages; and regionally significant archaeological sites. This zone will be managed to protect these historical features. Historic plaques may be established on portages, however, no displays or other facilities will be developed. Some dispersed campsites will be provided. Recreational management will also occur to ensure that this popular area does not suffer degradation from overuse.

- **H3 — Recollet Falls (85 ha)**

This zone includes Recollet Falls and immediate surroundings. Significant features include: the nationally significant voyageur route; the historic Recollet Portage; regionally significant archaeological sites; rock carvings (petroglyphs); and the scenic falls. The zone will be managed to protect and interpret these historical features. Historic plaques and displays will be provided. Heritage appreciation will be a high priority due to the zone's proximity to Highway 69 and connection with the D1 development zone which may contain a possible French River Heritage Centre. The Recollet Falls tramway will be maintained.

- **H4 — Coponaning (2 ha)**

This zone comprises the regionally significant historic townsite of Coponaning. Ruins and relics of this abandoned logging town are still in evidence. This zone will be managed to protect and interpret this historic townsite. Park information will be provided and displays may be constructed. Historical restorations and reconstructions may be undertaken on a minor scale. Camping will not be permitted.

2.5.4 Development Zone

Development zones include areas in the waterway corridor where major facility developments may occur to accommodate Park visitors and area tourists. Only one development zone occurs in the Park.

- **D1 — Voyageur Lookout (1 ha)**

This zone comprises the Ontario Ministry of Transportation and Communications picnic site at the Highway 69 bridge. It would accommodate the possible development of the French River Heritage Centre should it become feasible in the future. See Development section for details.

Resource uses permitted:

— trapping

Recreational uses permitted:

— picnicking
— hiking
— heritage appreciation
— snowmobiling

Development permitted:

— entrance road to building
— parking area
— picnicking and sanitary facilities
— pavilion building and associated facilities
— interpretive and heritage appreciation displays
— highway signs

3. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Resource management of French River Provincial Park will be carried out in accordance with the Park management plan. A Park operating plan will be prepared in keeping with the direction provided in this management plan. The operating plan will comprise specific operational guidelines on how to carry out the management of the Park's water, land, natural and cultural features.

3.1 NATURAL HERITAGE MANAGEMENT

The management of natural resources will be directed towards protection and heritage appreciation. Natural heritage sites, particularly those designated as nature reserve zones, will be protected. Incompatible resource uses and recreational activities that detract from these sites will be prohibited. Where natural heritage features occur on private land along the waterway corridor, the Ministry of Natural Resources will work with landowners to encourage and assist them in protecting and caring for the features on their properties.

Significant natural features on Park lands will be periodically monitored. These include Virginia Chain-fern wetlands, Massasauga Rattlesnake habitat, Wapiti (elk) range, cormorant nesting sites and rare plant habitats. Management prescriptions and controls will be established as required to ensure their protection. On-site information may be provided at significant sites through outdoor displays. Off-site information will primarily involve Park literature.

3.1.1 Vegetation Management

Commercial forestry operations will not be permitted in the Park. The Ministry will continue to suppress all wildfires in the Park and on adjacent land. Programs may be developed to control forest insects and diseases in the Park where these threaten significant heritage, aesthetic, or economic values. Where control is desirable, it will be directed as narrowly as possible to the specific insect or disease so as to have minimal effects on other components of the Park's environment. Biological control will be used wherever possible.

3.1.2 Wildlife Management

Wildlife will continue to be managed in accordance with policies and regulations prevailing in the area. Trapping will be permitted throughout the entire Park. Hunting will be permitted except in nature reserve zones. The Ministry will closely monitor the elk population. Elk hunting is not permitted due to the small population. The Ministry will seek to protect Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake habitat in the Park, and inform and educate Park visitors so as to minimize destruction of snakes and injury to humans. Opportunities for wildlife viewing will be encouraged.

3.1.3 Fisheries Management

The fishery will continue to be managed in accordance with policies and regulations prevailing in the area. Commercial fishing is permitted only on the existing licenced areas in Georgian Bay; and above the Chaudière Dams in the Upper French. Commercial baitfishing will be permitted.

There will be a special emphasis on monitoring and managing the French River fishery to maintain and enhance the health of the fishery and the quality of angling recreation. Specific management direction will be provided in the Sudbury District fisheries management plan. The area above the Chaudière Dams will be included in the North Bay District fisheries management plan.

3.2 WATER MANAGEMENT

The management of water will be directed towards the maintenance of good water quality and sufficient water flow for fisheries habitat and recreational purposes.

Implementation of Sturgeon-Nipissing-French River flood damage reduction study may result in

proposals for minor modifications of the French River including flow diversion, channel improvement, and weir construction. Primary areas of interest in the Park are the rapids west of Canton Island; the Horseshoe Falls east of Canton Island; the removal of blasted material from the bed of the French River near the Highway 69 bridge; and the deepening of the channel known as the Chute just west of Dry Pine Bay. Also, proposed is a diversion of water from Lake Nipissing through Bear Lake and the Wolseley River into Wolseley Bay.

These proposals would be evaluated through on-site appraisals and discussions with affected individuals and groups.

The French River contains some hydro-electric development potential. There are no active hydro-electric proposals.

There is an active proposal by an area group for a pleasure boat waterway, referred to as the Voyageur Waterway to link Lake Nipissing to Georgian Bay. The proposal includes the development of four locks and various channel improvements. Future studies will be required to assess the feasibility of proceeding further with this proposal.

The Ministry of Natural Resources will continue to promote good water quality on the French River, and will continue to work with the Ministry of the Environment and other government authorities and landowners to monitor water quality and respond to problem situations.

3.3 LAND MANAGEMENT

The management of land will be directed towards the maintenance of the natural landscape and riverside environment of the French River.

The existing private land use is very compatible with French River Provincial Park. As such, no private lands will be expropriated for Park purposes. If a specific patent parcel is desirable for resource protection purposes of Park management needs, a number of alternatives can be examined. Conservation easements may be pursued or lands could be acquired only when offered for sale, and government funds permit. The camps in the Park that are under Land Use Permit will be permitted subject to the conditions of the permit.

In keeping with the Ministry of Natural Resources policies, which have been in place in the French River area for a number of years, it is the intent not to dispose of Park land. However, due to the numerous patent parcels abutting the Park, some land disposition may be required. No disposition will occur if it conflicts with Park values. In no case will Park land be disposed of to other than the adjacent registered landowner, or where it changes the existing use of the adjacent patent land. Any dispositions that do occur must conform to Ministry policies in place for Crown land in the area outside of the Park.

3.3.1 Road, Rail and Utility Lines

No new roads will be developed in the Park. Expansion of existing road, rail, and utility line crossings of the French River may be permitted to meet essential public service needs. Before disposing of Park lands for these purposes, the Ministry of Natural Resources will work closely with proponents to ensure that:

- all reasonable alternatives have been considered;
- wherever possible, new crossings are located next to existing crossings of the same type;
- impacts on Park heritage values and on the river's scenic and unspoiled quality are minimized.

3.3.2 Solid Waste Disposal

Efforts will be made to clean up unauthorized dump sites and to prevent this activity from recurring. Where there is no practical alternative, disposal sites may be developed in the Park, within natural environment zones only. The one authorized site operating in the Park, located just east of Satchels Bay, will be maintained.

3.3.3. Mineral Exploration

Mineral exploration and development will not be permitted in historical and nature reserve zones. Exploration within natural environment zones will be carried out through the exploratory licence of occupation procedure. The public will be given the opportunity to comment on exploratory licences of occupation before they are issued. Any licences issued will include specific conditions restricting exploration and development so as to ensure that Park heritage values are protected. Staking will not be permitted in the Park.

Exploratory licences of occupation cover specified areas and are issued for five-year terms, with possible extensions of up to 11 years. On meeting specified conditions, licence holders may apply to lease lands needed for extracting any valuable minerals found.

3.3.4 Aggregate

The extraction of aggregate will not be permitted, except for garbage management purposes at the authorized dump site at Satchel's Bay.

3.3.5 Private Lands

Privately-owned property within the Park boundary is not included in the Park. Landowners are not restricted in the sale or transfer of private land. There will be no right of first refusal on private lands offered for sale. The use of private lands will continue to be regulated by the existing jurisdictions. The Ministry of Natural Resources will continue its formal input role in all plan review and approval on patent lands. Indian lands do not form part of the Park. Land use on the Dokis and French River Reserves will continue to be governed by the Dokis and Henvey Inlet Band Councils respectively. While the Ministry of Natural Resources has no formal input into planning and development on Indian Reserves, the Ministry will seek to maintain a co-operative relationship with the two Bands so as to encourage compatible development of Reserve shorelands.

3.4 CULTURAL HERITAGE MANAGEMENT

The management of cultural resources will be directed to protection and heritage appreciation. The Ministry of Natural Resources will continue to work with the Ministry of Citizenship and Culture in identifying archaeological and historical sites which should be protected along the waterway corridor.

Cultural heritage sites, particularly historical zones, will be protected. Incompatible uses and recreational activities that detract from these sites will be prohibited.

The main historic values presently identified are: archaeological seasonal encampment sites; pictographs and petroglyphs; portages along the historic travel routes; underwater canoe spill sites below falls and rapids; and traditional campsites. These values relate primarily to the river's traditional use as a transportation route, an activity which is still in place today. In most instances, these values comprise the physical evidence of human impact on the environment and do not require any special protection. Periodic inspections of significant sites will occur with protective controls established as required.

Historical artifacts and constructions such as the pictograph and petroglyph sites and the Coponaning townsite will be closely monitored. The removal of artifacts or destruction of historical features is illegal. Minor historical restorations or reconstructions may be undertaken and outdoor displays may be provided at significant sites for heritage appreciation purposes. Off-site interpretation of the cultural significance of the French River will be carried out through Park literature.

Where cultural heritage resources occur on private land along the waterway corridor, the Ministry of Natural Resources will work with landowners to encourage and assist them in protecting and caring for the features on their properties.

4. CLIENT SERVICES

Client services will be managed in accordance with the Park management plan. A Park operating plan will be prepared in keeping with the direction provided in the management plan. The operating plan will comprise specific operational guidelines on how to carry out client services management. The Ministry will encourage the involvement of the private sector in the provision of Park services.

4.1 VISITOR SERVICES

The primary objective of Visitor Services will be to orient Park visitors to the heritage and recreational attributes of the French River. Self-use approaches, such as publications and display panels will be used to deliver Park information, resource interpretation, recreational skills and park management messages.

4.1.1 Park Information

A public information program for Park visitors will be established. A Park map will be produced to enable users to safely explore and use the river. Information will be provided that will direct river campers away from heavily used areas. Low impact camping at dispersed sites will be encouraged. A 'leave no trace' attitude will be promoted in order to minimize human impact on the Park environment.

Visitors will be advised to exercise caution regarding safety hazards. Information will be presented cautioning visitors regarding travel along the Georgian Bay, particularly as it pertains

to severe weather conditions, buoyed yachting routes and exposed open water stretches such as the opening at Dead Island. Visitors will also be informed about rattlesnakes and snake bites.

The importance of respecting other users will be stressed, particularly the rights of private property owners. Park literature will inform visitors about the commercial services and attractions that are available in the area to enhance their stay and generate local tourism expenditures.

4.1.2 Resource Interpretation

The natural and cultural history of the French River will be interpreted to the Park visitor through the use of the "historic transportation" theme. This broad theme encompasses the following sub-themes:- "glacial geology"; "the river as a plant and animal migration corridor"; and "water travel". The water travel cultural subtheme will be divided into the following components:- native people; early explorers and missionaries; voyageurs; loggers and farmers; and early tourists. Innovative ways of co-operative portrayal of this broad heritage of the river will be pursued with other agencies and business interests. This could include the construction of a Heritage Centre on Highway 69. Historic portages will receive priority as they provide physical evidence of man's past presence.

4.1.3 Recreational Skills

Recreation information will acquaint Park visitors with the recreational attributes of the Park and the skills required for minimum impact river travel. The Park map will serve as the basic information for this purpose. With improved skills, visitors will make better use and enjoyment of the Park while minimizing their impact on the environment.

4.2 RECREATION MANAGEMENT

The management of recreation will be directed towards the provision of low density, backcountry travel along the river. River camping by boat or canoe is a traditional activity associated with fishing and canoe tripping. Access to the river will be through the existing entry locations. A co-operative arrangement will be sought with the private sector to ensure an adequate provision of river access opportunities. No car campgrounds will be established. Car camping use of the Little French River access point will be monitored and managed as required to ensure proper use of the site with priority given to its boat access function.

The following are general guidelines that will direct the recreation management program:

- the program will be implemented gradually as the various elements are needed and can be funded;
- the maintenance of low density camping use on the river;
- Park facilities will be kept to a minimum;
- involvement of the public in management of the river to encourage stewardship and reduce reliance on Ministry funding; and,
- a gradual phase-in of overnight camping controls and only to the extent required.

The initial task of the recreational management program will be to accurately determine the actual level of use and evaluate the target presented in the Sudbury and North Bay District Land Use Guidelines.

A user survey will be undertaken for this purpose. This survey will collect important data on use density by river section, user origin, user likes and dislikes, party size, length of stay, main entry locations, and travel routes. In addition, existing and potential campsites will be identified through a field inventory. Information will be gathered on condition of campsites and portages. These surveys will assist in determining the river's actual carrying capacity for river camping use, ie. number of designated campsites. Based on carrying capacity and space standards, a target for the number of backcountry travel opportunities will be determined. This process will be carried out in the context of the Park management plan and may require plan amendment.

Controls on overnight camping may be required to protect the Park environment from inappropriate uses and overuse, to ensure visitors enjoy high quality waterway experiences. Such controls will be gradually phased in and directed at resolving a specific need. They will be applied in a manner that is least restrictive to the user's enjoyment of the river. In addition, the public will be well informed about new controls.

Campsites will be designated by unobtrusive signs along most sections of the river. Group camping will be monitored and a party size restriction may be established to protect the Park environment and the experience of others. In areas where firewood is in short supply or during periods of extreme fire hazard, campers may be

required to carry portable stoves. In the future, restrictions may be placed on the number of parties allowed to camp on the river.

Maintenance standards for campsite and day use picnic site clean-up, garbage disposal, portage clearing and signage will be established in the Park operating plan. The feasibility of utilizing the private sector in all aspects of the Park operation will be examined.

4.3 COMMERCIAL SERVICES

The Ministry will work closely with the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation and commercial tourist operators to support the tourist industry and encourage its long-term viability. All facility-based accommodation will be provided by the commercial tourist operators and cottagers.

New commercial development will be confined to the minimum that is required having due regard for Park values. Proposals to expand existing commercial establishments onto adjacent Park land will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Such facility expansions would be encouraged to occur in a manner that complements resource protection and recreational use in the Park.

4.4 MARKETING

Peak season marketing and promotion of river camping will be kept to a minimum. Park marketing efforts will be low-key and directed at the low use shoulder seasons. The Ministry will assist in the marketing of commercial establishments by providing Park visitors with information on commercial services. In addition to river camping, Park visitors will also be encouraged to use commercial establishments in the off-season as bases from which to explore the Park.

4.5 CO-OPERATIVE ASSOCIATION

The Ministry of Natural Resources will encourage the formation of a co-operative association to assist in the management of the river. This would involve resort and property owners and interested persons based on the theme of shared responsibility in river management. This association would formally recognize and ensure the continuation of the custodian role the property owners and others have traditionally played in the maintenance of the natural quality of the river.

This association would be involved in:

- publication production, including educational literature such as a Park map;
- garbage clean-up through organized clean-up days;
- use monitoring and identification of problems associated with overuse;
- encouragement of a cottage watch program.

4.6 SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

Scientific research by qualified individuals which contributes to knowledge of natural and cultural history and to environmental and recreational management will be encouraged in the Park. Subjects of particular research interest are: water quality and quantity; fisheries; archaeology, as it pertains to occupation sites; early exploration and fur trade history; significant plant associations, in particular, the Virginia Chain-fern wetlands; and significant fauna such as the cormorants, Massasauga Rattlesnake and Wapiti. All research programs will require Ministry of Natural Resources approval and must also meet all other applicable provincial and federal government requirements.

5. DEVELOPMENT

New development on the river will be kept to a minimum with the exception of the development zone. The location, design and materials of all facilities constructed within French River Park will, to the greatest extent possible, reflect its waterway character. All development will be carried out in accordance with approved site and development plans. Once the development is in place, it will be managed in accordance with the Park operating plan. The following facilities will be proposed through the Ministry of Natural Resources work program planning and special funding initiatives.

5.1 PARK SIGN SYSTEM

A sign system will be established to provide a consistent identity and co-ordinated approach to inform and direct visitors to facilities and services offered in the Park. This will involve the integration of provincial highway signs as well as provincial park and heritage river signs. The Ministry of Natural Resources will work with the Ontario Ministry of Transportation and Communications to comply with their guidelines in the case of signs along highways and secondary roads leading to the Park. Campsites and portages along the river will be marked by unobtrusive signs.

5.2 FRENCH RIVER HERITAGE CENTRE

A heritage appreciation facility would be an appropriate means to inform the Park visitors and travelling public about the national and provincial significance of the French River. The Ministry of Natural Resources will encourage the undertaking of a study to determine the feasibility of constructing a Heritage Centre in the development zone southwest of the Highway 69 bridge. The study would also consider alternative locations along the Highway 69 corridor outside the Park and would evaluate the impact of development on Park use.

This building would be designed for heritage appreciation based on the "historic transportation theme". Visitors would be introduced to the natural and cultural history of the French River through a variety of means including: displays, historic maps, paintings, old photos, historic implements, artifacts, and audio-visual presentations. Consideration will be given to having staff wear period costumes and provide voyageur canoe excursions.

This facility would provide a tourist attraction along the heavily travelled Highway 69 corridor. It would complement the Science North centre in Sudbury and tie in with historic Fort William in Thunder Bay.

5.3 HISTORIC AND NATURE DISPLAY EXHIBITS

Some self-use outdoor displays may be developed at natural and cultural heritage sites, eg. abandoned townsite of Coponaning. Displays would be unobtrusive and intended for educational purposes.

5.4 DISPERSED INDIVIDUAL CAMPSITES

Where required to meet Park objectives, the Ministry will designate campsites along the river once the campsite opportunity target has been evaluated. The vast majority will be existing sites, however, a few new sites may be developed. The rights of adjacent property owners will be respected in the designation of campsites. Some existing sites may be temporarily or permanently closed.

5.5 PORTAGES

Some portages may be rerouted if deemed necessary for public safety, etc. The two existing tramways in the H3 and NR3 zones will be maintained. No additional tramways will be constructed.

6. PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

6.1 PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of the management plan will involve resource protection, client services, and the development of approved facilities. Implementation of the plan will be based on work program planning and funding. The following briefly summarizes the main priorities for implementation over the next ten (10) years.

6.1.1 Park Operating Plan

A Park operating plan will be prepared to provide specific guidelines on the operational aspects of the various Park programs. An advisory group, comprising representatives of the various user groups on the river, will assist in the preparation of the Park operating plan.

6.1.2 Resource Protection

This will involve:

- site protection of significant park features. These include: historic and archaeological sites such as the Coponaning townsite, pictographs and petroglyphs; Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake habitat; Double-crested Cormorant nesting sites; Virginia Chainfern wetlands; and the habitat of several rare plant species;
- input to the Sudbury and North Bay District fisheries management plans;
- resource inventory studies on earth science, life science and cultural heritage.

6.1.3 Client Services

This will involve:

- an information program for Park visitors which will include the preparation of a Park map;
- a recreation management program consisting of: a user survey and campsite inventory; campsite and portage maintenance; public relations and enforcement;

- the possible establishment of a co-operative association to assist the Ministry in the management of the river.

In addition to the above, the Ministry will encourage the undertaking of a study to determine the feasibility of developing the proposed French River Heritage Centre.

6.1.4 Development

The following facilities will be developed as funds permit:

- Park sign system;
- historic and nature display exhibits;
- dispersed individual campsites;
- portages (if required);
- possible development of French River Heritage Centre.

6.2 PLAN REVIEW

The French River Provincial Park Management Plan will be reviewed on an ongoing basis throughout its 20-year lifespan. The review will be conducted in the following manner:

- review of the process leading to the initial management plan;
- update of background information and data about the Park resources and use;
- review the status of implementation of the approved management plan and provincial policies;
- identify OMNR, other agencies and public issues of concern;
- prepare "issues and suggested solutions" document for public review;
- present "issues and suggested solutions" document to public for their review and comment;
- review proposed revisions recommended by the public;
- prepare and receive approval for plan amendment.

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